IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims according to the following listing, in which insertions are indicated by underline and deletions are indicated by strikethrough or by double brackets. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a hollow cylindrical body, comprising the steps of:

bringing end faces of a plate material, the plate material having fingers projecting from corners along a joining direction, into abutment against each other to form protrusions projecting along the joining direction with end faces of the fingers, and also to form a hollow cylindrical body;

gripping said protrusions and friction-stir-welding abutting regions of the end faces of the plate material to join the end faces to each other, thereby forming a hollow cylindrical body having said protrusions; and

removing said protrusions.

2. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a hollow cylindrical body according to claim 1, wherein said hollow cylindrical body having said protrusions is pressed from a side of an outer circumferential wall surface thereof when the abutting regions are friction-stir-welded.

3. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a hollow cylindrical body according to claim 1, wherein the abutting regions are friction-stir-welded while said hollow cylindrical body is inclined with respect to [[the]] a horizontal direction.

4. (Previously Presented) A method of manufacturing a hollow cylindrical body according to claim 1, wherein a wheel rim that is joined to a wheel disk to produce a vehicular wheel is manufactured as said hollow cylindrical body.

5. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding process for bringing a first end face and a second end face of a metal workpiece into abutment against each other, and thereafter joining said first end face and said second end face to each other with a rotating friction stir welding tool,

wherein when a first end having said first end face is present on a retreating side and a second end having said second end face is present on an advancing side, a workpiece plunging member having a substantially circular cross section, which is disposed on [[the]] a tip end of said friction stir welding tool, is plunged with a central region thereof being displaced from a boundary line between said first end face and said second end face to said second end within a range equal to or smaller than the radius of the workpiece plunging member.

6. (Previously Presented) A friction stir welding process according to claim 5, wherein said workpiece plunging member is displaced from said boundary line to said second end by a distance equal to or smaller than one-half of the radius of the workpiece plunging member.

7. (Original) A friction stir welding process according to claim 5, wherein a workpiece having said first end face and a workpiece having said second end face are separate from each other and are made of a chief component comprising the same metal.

8. (Previously Presented) A friction stir welding process for bringing a first end face and a second end face of a metal workpiece having a curved surface into abutment against each other to form abutting regions, and then friction-stir-welding the abutting regions to join said end faces to each other, wherein

said first end face and said second end face have burrs projecting in a thickness direction of said metal workpiece, and sags projecting in a direction transverse to said thickness direction;

when said abutting regions are formed, said sags of said first end face and said second end face are disposed in confronting relation to each other and positioned on an outer circumferential wall surface of said curved surface, and said burrs are positioned on an inner circumferential wall surface of said curved surface; and

when the abutting regions are friction-stir-welded, a plunging member of a friction stir welding tool is plunged into the outer circumferential wall surface on which said sags are disposed in confronting relation to each other, and thereafter said friction stir welding tool is moved to scan said abutting regions.

9. (Previously Presented) A friction stir welding process according to claim 8, wherein said first end face and said second end face are present on the same metal workpiece, and said abutting regions are provided by curving said metal workpiece to bring said first end face and said second end face into abutment against each other.

10-15. (Canceled)

16-31. (Canceled)